

Old Assumptions, New Realities includes chapters from:

Scott Allard, Associate Professor at the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration

Alison Earle, Co-Director of the Project on Global Working Families

Jacob Hacker, Stanley B. Resor Professor of Political Science at Yale University

Jody Heymann, Professor in the Faculties of Medicine and Arts at McGill University

Marcia K. Meyers, Professor of Social Work and Public Affairs at the University of Washington

Paul Osterman, Nanyang Technological University (NTU) Professor of Human Resources and Management at the M.I.T. Sloan School of Management

Robert D. Plotnick, Professor of Public Affairs at the University of Washington

Jennifer Romich, Associate Professor of Social Work at the University of Washington

Jodi Sandfort, Associate Professor at the Humphrey Institute for Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota

Michael Sherraden, Benjamin E. Youngdahl Professor of Social Development at Washington University in St Louis

Michael Stoll, Professor of Public Policy and Urban Planning at the University of California, Los Angeles

The West Coast Poverty Center supports research on the causes, consequences, and effective policy responses to poverty. For more information, please visit our website: wpcpc.washington.edu.

New WCPC Book Released by Russell Sage Press

Old Assumptions, New Realities: Ensuring Economic Security for Working Families in the 21st Century

Edited by Robert D. Plotnick, Marcia K. Meyers, Jennifer Romich, and Steven Rathgeb Smith

For over seventy years, the Social Security Act (SSA) has provided the foundation of national social insurance programs in the U.S. Its major programs were aimed primarily at adults who could no longer work because of age or disability and have greatly improved the economic security of older and disabled adults and their dependents. But the original provisions of the Act did much less to protect working-age adults and their children.

Over the years, federal, state and local governments have addressed this and other gaps in the initial SSA provisions by developing a large and largely uncoordinated array of programs targeted to specific populations and needs—from health and nutritional assistance for low-income pregnant women to public and publicly subsidized housing, means-tested child care subsidies, public preschool services, specialized social and mental health services, employment preparation and vocational training programs, and many more. Less visibly, federal and state lawmakers have used specialized tax deductions and credits to create incentives for employers to provide benefits; to subsidize individual expenditures for home mortgages, retirement and college savings, and other expenses; and to provide refundable tax credits for low income workers.

In light of profound changes in family structure, demographics, and the economy since the SSA was enacted, today's working families confront new realities that go beyond the reach of many of these programs. The contributions in *Old Assumptions, New Realities* reevaluate the existing framework and consider new policies that could better promote economic security for today's working families. In the volume:

- Jacob Hacker explores rising income volatility and outlines how a new, multipurpose social insurance system could address several major sources of families' economic vulnerability.
- Michael Stoll makes several suggestions for improving the education and training of low-skill workers as well as ways to reduce various barriers these workers face in the labor market.
- Paul Osterman suggests ways to involve the demand side of the labor market in work force services and training efforts.
- Michael Sherraden considers the benefits of creating more inclusive programs for asset-building.
- Jody Heyman and Alison Earle review how public policies have lagged behind transformations in American family life and work and ways in which policies could adapt to these changes.
- Scott Allard discusses the growing role of nonprofit service organizations in the modern safety net and its implications for social service provision.
- Jodi Sandfort proposes ways to revamp the social service delivery system to eliminate redundancies and improve access to services.

While the relevance of the SSA has been eroding for many years, the recent economic recession and the sluggish recovery have made the debate over how to address its limitations all the more timely and important. Some of these programs are at risk because of limited resources even while the need for them is increasing, creating another new reality the editors and authors grapple with throughout the volume.

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The West Coast Poverty Center serves as a hub for research, education, and policy analysis leading to greater understanding of the causes and consequences of poverty and effective approaches to reducing it in the west coast states. The Center, located at the University of Washington, is one of three regional poverty centers funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE). More information about the West Coast Poverty Center is available from our website: wcpc.washington.edu

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